

Patients consult visiting dermatologist

By MC2(AW) Honey Nixon, Public Affairs Office

Residents and service-members alike recently had the opportunity to consult, LCDR Michael Yablonsky, June 25 – 28 at U.S. Naval Station Hospital Guantanamo Bay.

“Every six months, we have a dermatologist come to the hospital who sees consults from our primary care physicians here,” said Lt. Blake Ellis, head of Primary Care.

“A consult is set up if their physician hasn’t had luck in treating their skin issues, or they require a surgical procedure, such as mole removal from the face to prevent possible scarring. A lot of people don’t realize their primary care doctor can also take care of their skin. Also, as with any of our visiting specialty care physicians, the opportunity for training is provided for the general practice doctors, so they can stay up-to-date on the latest treatments and procedures.”

Yablonsky, who has been involved in treating skin problems for four years, saw more than 100 patients last week, and used his time to provide follow-up care and educate patients on maintaining the



Photo by MC2(AW) Honey Nixon

LCDR Michael Yablonsky performs a minor procedure on Kevin Gilmore, one of many patients who took advantage of his visit to GTMO.

health of their skin.

“A lot of education went on this week,” said Yablonsky. “I saw a good amount of acne, skin infections, possible skin cancers, and I did some mole removals. Some of the patient issues the primary care physician could’ve addressed, but they just never went to primary care with their concerns because they didn’t realize primary care could take care of it.”

With GTMO being a tropi-

cal climate, servicemembers often take advantage of outdoor activities that can result in a lot of sun exposure.

People also aren’t aware that daily exposure to sun still impacts them, even if they aren’t engaging in outdoor activities.

“The biggest thing people overlook about their skincare, is that even if you don’t get a sunburn, there are still skin changes that occur from daily exposure,” said Yablonsky.

He urges people to perform basic self-exams to stay aware of these skin changes and adds that following the ‘ABCDE’ rule is helpful.

— A is asymmetry, meaning if you visually cut your mole in half it should be a mirror image of the other half.

— B is border, the mole should have a smooth and sharp border.

— C is color, look for multiple colors, because new colors indicate change.

— D is diameter, which should be no greater than a pencil eraser or 6mm.

— E is for evolution, looking for any significant change.

“If you don’t see anything worrisome, and you aren’t regularly seeing a dermatologist, then a once a year self exam is fine, but if you see a dermatologist regularly, I recommend a self-exam once every three months,” said Yablonsky.

Some people are naturally more higher risk than others for skin problems or skin cancers including those who are fair skinned, redheaded, freckly, have lowered immunities or possess a family history of atypical moles or melanoma.

Sun activities are not all bad, and being proactive can not only protect someone’s skin but also possibly save their life.

“This is a tropical area, and every person I met down here goes boating, snorkeling or fishing,” said Yablonsky. “I think that’s great, but it’s good practice to do your activities before 10 a.m. or after 3 p.m. when the sun is not directly over you and it’s less intense. Also, if you are going to be in the water, choose waterproof sunscreen and re-apply every time you get out.”

Additionally, items such as wide brimmed hats, a long-sleeved shirt, and sun block can go a long way in protecting one’s skin.

Yablonsky also emphasized educating children and instilling good skincare habits early on, because most kids enjoying being outside, especially in environments like GTMO.

For more information or to set an appointment with their primary care physician for any skin issues or a general skincare check-up, call the Naval Hospital at 72110.



Photo by MC2(AW) Honey Nixon

Yablonski removes a skin tag from Gilmore's eyelid.